

SAMPLE

NOT DONE YET!

**HOW WOMEN OVER 50
REGAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE &
CLAIM WORKPLACE POWER**

Bonnie Marcus

Author of *The Politics of Promotion*

Praise for *Not Done Yet!*

“This book spoke to me. I loved it. I have been on a journey to explore what we know about ourselves and our limitations. This has been and is my work. The book made me see that the feelings of being “powerless over my present and future” are just ideas I’ve told myself. As an actress, the fear of never getting another job because of my age or the way that I look stood before me for so long, and after reading this book, I see that it is important that I always advocate for myself and for other women. Thank you, Bonnie! I too am a badass woman. I can’t wait to share this with other women!”

MARISSA JARET WINOKUR, Tony Award-winning actress

“*Not Done Yet!* offers a valuable road map for women over fifty. They can conquer “gendered ageism” on the job while becoming their true, best selves. Like wine, such badass women will age to perfection.”

JOANN S. LUBLIN, former career columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*

“In her inimitable sassy and straight-forward way, Bonnie Marcus reminds readers that we should not and must not ‘go gentle into that good night.’ With humor, encouragement, and tangible tips, this book provides the impetus to take control of your life after fifty—regardless of what anyone else may have in mind for you. It’s a great read!”

LOIS P. FRANKEL, PhD, author of *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office* and *Ageless Women, Timeless Wisdom*

“I loved this book! I know, and my mom knew, that anything is possible at any age. I’m constantly redefining my goals and I get caught up in fear. This book helped me to see that the conflicts are between me and me. By thinking differently with optimism and hope, I can reframe my negativity into possibility and change. This book helped me see redefining my goals as a positive, and inspired me to lean into the change with badass passion.”

MELISSA RIVERS, TV personality, producer, and podcaster

“Not only does Bonnie debunk myths about women’s abilities after turning fifty, but she also provides tips and tools to ensure that they live the second half of their lives with courage, daring, and determination!”

LORI SOKOL, PhD, executive director, *Women’s eNews*

“A powerful and very personal invitation to every woman to unleash—at last!—her inner badass in the second half of life. This book is a nudge, a guide, and a road map to stepping into our power and potential—for ourselves and for the world—after a half-century often spent serving, pleasing, and adapting.”

AVIVAH WITTENBERG-COX, CEO of 20-First, gender expert, author, and TEDx speaker

“*Not Done Yet!* is a life-changing guide for professional women over fifty to dump limiting ideas about aging and step into their full power. With sass and attitude, Marcus lays out the challenges and opportunities of staying marketable at any age. Share it with your friends; gift it to yourself.

BONNIE ST. JOHN, Paralympic ski medalist and author of *Micro-Resilience: Minor Shifts for Major Boosts in Focus, Drive, and Energy*

“My personal motto is “mid-career at 65,” so of course I’m a huge fan of *Not Done Yet!* Bonnie Marcus lays out the case for female confidence born of wisdom, experience, and the fierce desire to contribute. Her book is a guide to navigating a rich, joyous path through the second and maybe best part of working life.”

SALLY HELGESEN, author of *How Women Rise*, *The Female Advantage* and *The Female Vision*

“As an author, podcaster, and thought leader, Bonnie Marcus is an inspiration to women everywhere, regardless of their age or career aspirations. Her new book, *Not Done Yet!*, has lessons for women who

are struggling to find their direction and purpose. The timeless advice can also help younger women who may not be in touch with their badass spirits yet. I also recommend listening to her *Badass Women* podcast, which offers engaging stories from women who have overcome challenges, soared past barriers, and paved the way for new opportunities.”

VERONICA VICENTE, COO, Crowe Global

“Bonnie Marcus channels her anger over ageism and her years of experience as an executive coach into a highly readable, extraordinarily helpful guide to navigating the work world after fifty. She tackles common fears that hold us back, and offers specific advice for self-advocacy and responding to ageist workplace attitudes. *Not Done Yet!* reads like a big fist in the air that will bring out the badass in all of us and remind us that getting older is a time not for apology but for pride and action.”

JEANNIE RALSTON, co-founder of NextTribe

“*Not Done Yet!* encourages women to acknowledge their inner power and to execute it. This is a must-read—informative, smart, and entertaining as well. I couldn’t put it down. Barbara makes crucially important truths not only about working women over fifty, but also about women who are dealing with their own feelings about aging.”

BARBARA ROSE BROOKER, founder of AgeMarch.org, and author of *The Viagra Diaries* and *Love, Sometimes*

“‘Assumptions, Fears, and All the Crap about Aging That Holds You Back’ is my favorite chapter in this fierce book about acceptance and loving yourself. As a producer in Hollywood, I know firsthand the struggles that ageism can invite in. This book helps you see it, name it, and move towards owning your own power. Thank you, Bonnie!”

JULIE STERN, executive TV and film producer

“Bonnie Marcus is on a mission: to help older professional women fight back against ageist stereotypes. In this fast-paced book, she draws on the ups and downs of her own and her interviewees’ lives to coax and cajole women to stay relevant, advocate for themselves, assertively handle ageist comments, and find fulfillment in the power of experience.”

ALISON MAITLAND, co-author of *INdivisible: Radically Rethinking Inclusion for Sustainable Business Results*

“It’s well documented that workplaces benefit from women in senior management, as gender-balanced teams deliver superior results. Yet women (and men) over fifty face unique challenges. In *Not Done Yet!*, Marcus takes on gendered ageism in the workplace and offers insights and practical advice challenging the status quo, office politics, and meritocracies to shove ageist assumptions out the window in order to evolve the workplace to this century.”

JEFFERY TOBIAS HALTER, gender strategist and president, YWomen

“*Bonnie Marcus!* Oh, I’m not done yet! In this fabulous, irreverent, and honest book, Bonnie introduces us to the notion of declaring our power, rewriting our stories, and standing up for our position as badass women. She shares intimate glimpses into the life of a creative woman who has experienced the same fears and frustrations that lead us into deficit instead of abundance. She digs deep into her own process and shares her own stories, uniqueness, and truths, which make us feel connected to our femininity, power, and choices, as well as to ourselves and her. We are never done. I want to be her best friend!”

SUZY UNGER, MA, licensed marriage and family therapist

“Bonnie Marcus lays it all out: the fears, the self-doubt, the self-sabotage that often afflict women over fifty, and then provides direct, common sense approaches to enable her readers to find their own paths to both thriving and flourishing as they learn to savor this stage of their lives and careers.”

TIMI ANYON HALLEM, partner at Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

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Bonnie Marcus

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BOOKS

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Introduction

My rant

Okay. Right from the get-go, I'm gonna be straight with you. I'm pissed. I consider myself to be smart, savvy, and sassy. I know I have value. I can declare with confidence that I've evolved over the decades into a mature, level-headed woman with extensive experience and expertise. This isn't meant to be a personal brag fest by any means, but if it's taken that way, then let it be a brag fest for all women over fifty. Because we all have value, and I'm pissed that society seems hell-bent on pushing us to the sidelines and diminishing our contributions. And I want to scream, "Hold on. Not so fast. We're NOT DONE YET!"

Not Done Yet! is a book for all working women over fifty who are dealing with aging and the bullshit ageist assumptions and stereotypes that keep us small. We live in a culture that worships youthfulness and requires daily sacrifices to the beauty gods. Every day we witness younger women in the workplace being favored. We're also keenly aware that our skin is wrinkling, our hair is turning gray, and that none of this is tolerated in a youth-tilted culture. We sense our power and respect slipping away.

I see signs of my aging every time I look in the mirror. And it sucks. Not because I'm unhappy with growing old. That's a gift! It sucks

because society won't let me and my sisters age in peace. We live in a world eager to shove women aged fifty-plus out the door to make room for younger workers. And the rationale is that anyone younger or prettier has more value. Pure BS.

I want to feel fulfilled by my work. And I want to be respected and acknowledged for that work. I want to keep working for the foreseeable future. Like many of you, I need to keep working. Sure, I could let my hair go gray and stop using the antiaging products that minimize the visible signs of my age. But I know in my gut that I will undoubtedly face the consequences of such decisions. I fear that the more my age shows, the less respect I'll receive, the less I'll be valued in the marketplace, and that my income will suffer as a result.

Given this bias, we all have choices about what compromises we're willing to make to stay marketable and keep our jobs. Should I have an eyelift? Should I do Botox and fillers in the hopes of maintaining my status and income? But even as we take steps to erase the effects of aging, we understand deep down that aging will inevitably catch up one day. How much will it affect our careers? Navigating this is something we face as professional women over fifty.

Age-related assumptions about women go beyond the cultural bias for youth and beauty. We're told that people over fifty aren't promotable, aren't worth investing in, don't have the mental capacity or physical stamina to compete—despite evidence to the contrary. Workplace practices remain based on these ageist assumptions. Policies about hiring, firing, promotion, and compensation reveal the underlying bias. And women, unfortunately, suffer earlier because of the perceived importance of good looks and the bogus notion that aging women aren't attractive. This has a substantial impact on our career trajectories.

We accept these assumptions as the god-given truth. And the real danger is that, over time, we accept them as *our* limitations. As we internalize these beliefs, we diminish ourselves, keep ourselves small,

and, as a result, accelerate our aging and jeopardize our health, job security, and financial viability. This needs to stop.

I'm pissed that years of education and solid experience cease to matter. Years of managing to balance work and raising a family, often sacrificing our well-being in the process, don't matter. *Put everyone else first.* That was the message we heard loud and clear from our mothers. Somehow, having followed that advice mitigates the guilt we feel for choosing a career, or maybe we had no choice. But we still feel guilty. We've met our bosses' demands for tight deadlines with no flexibility, no real maternity leave, and certainly no family leave. Yeah, we've done all this. We may even have additional caregiving responsibilities for our parents just as we're experiencing an empty nest. Whew. When does it end?

Now, here come the fifties. Menopause, hot flashes, raging hormones, and we still go to work each day trying to do our best to win approval, acknowledgment, and promotions. But we sense change on the horizon. Our once sought-after opinion is dismissed, our workload reassigned. Younger people are promoted around us as we're pushed into the shadows of irrelevance. Demeaning remarks about older people create an environment of fear, especially for those of us who feel the pressure to remain youthfully attractive to stay employed. We ask ourselves, *What's going to happen to me? Will I be forced out? And if that happens, who will hire me?* The fear is palpable for those of us sensitive to the changing tide.

Yet I'm here to tell you, if we approach our fifties, sixties, and beyond without that awareness, we may be blindsided, believing our track record will allow us to prevail until retirement, believing that we'll be treated with dignity and respect because of our past success. We need to wake up. That isn't reality! We need to deal with our own *mishegas*, our own craziness about aging, create a strong positive image for ourselves, and march on boldly. We need to adopt a badass, winning attitude and do it ASAP—before we fall victim to continued

age and gender discrimination. We need to regain our confidence and power to claim our rightful place in the world. The world desperately needs our wisdom, our experience, our voices more than ever.

There's absolutely no point crying over lost youth, expending a ton of energy wishing you were thirty again, wishing you looked more youthful. Right now, at this point in your career, you have what it takes to continue to thrive. You need to celebrate who you are, what you've achieved, and what potential you still have to make a difference. Because despite all this ageist bullshit, lots of positives and opportunities are out there for you. Reject the belief that it's all downhill from here. Turn all this around and take back control of your life and career. That's why I wrote this book. It's time for women fifty and beyond to claim their workplace power. You can do it. We can do it. We're *Not Done Yet!* And in this book, I give you the tools to step up and own your talent and the power of your age.

The solution

The first thing to do is to ditch all the fears and assumptions that keep you small, that prevent you from living your life to the fullest and thriving in your career. Part One of this book, "Assumptions, Fears, and All the Crap about Aging That Holds You Back," is a guide for you to recognize what beliefs about aging you are currently holding on to that don't serve you. There are coaching exercises in this section and throughout the book, so use a notebook or journal to record your responses to the exercises, along with any insights and emotions that surface as you do so.

Part Two, "Stop Playing Small, and Do What It Takes to Stay in the Game," offers you the tools you need to stay marketable and keep your job. Yes, I know that what you experience every day as an older woman in the workplace brings you down. It's the double whammy

of gendered ageism. You need to consciously decide to fight for what you deserve, maintain your status, and continue to succeed, if not for your financial security, then for your self-esteem. These chapters give you specific guidance on how to step up your game at work and create the visibility and credibility you need, despite the prevalence of bias. It's more important than ever before to understand and communicate your value, speak up, and pull yourself out of the shadows. I'll guide you through this.

The last part, "Be Your Badass Self," helps you regain your confidence and power by adopting a badass attitude. Maybe you were a badass little girl or maybe you've always been the compliant good girl. (I confess I transitioned from a badass little girl to a compliant good girl as I grew up.) Whether a badass mindset is familiar or foreign to you, you need it now to face the adverse circumstances you face at work and in life because of your age. And by "badass," I don't mean an angry, chip-on-her-shoulder woman. "Badass" doesn't mean "bitch." Being a badass means owning who you are, owning your experience, your wisdom, your talent, your age. A badass mindset gives you swagger, and you need this now, girlfriend. Perhaps you've always needed more confidence, but now's the time to act. Now you may be challenged like never before at work and you need to fight back. You may be held hostage by ageist assumptions and now is *not* the time to escape by cowering in the background, hoping no one will take notice of your age. Quite the opposite. You need to confront your situation head-on. The fight I'm talking about means taking back control, losing the doormat mentality, putting yourself front and center, and standing up for yourself.

I'm not suggesting an external makeover for a youthful look, although that's an option if you want it. I'm talking about an internal makeover that boosts your confidence and energy. I'm talking about using your badass energy to do your best work and get the recognition you deserve, not a pink slip. I'm talking about adopting new skills and

improving those you already have, practicing self-care, and writing a new, powerful story for yourself, for now and the rest of your life. That makeover starts immediately.

Say it out loud: “*I’m not done yet!*” Own it. Live it. Your livelihood and well-being depend on you believing in your value and your future. So, put on your big-girl panties and step up.

Are you with me?

Part One

ASSUMPTIONS, FEARS, AND ALL THE CRAP ABOUT AGING THAT HOLDS YOU BACK

Most of my life I've been pretty clueless about how my fears and assumptions have stifled me. I never really gave it too much thought until I started coaching other women to overcome their self-imposed barriers. Now with an increased attention to it, I've become much more aware of how my own bullshit has hindered my success and restricted my ability to experience joy. I work every day to push aside the beliefs that don't serve me. But I have to say this: managing negative thoughts and emotions isn't easy and it's an ongoing battle for all of us.

In reality, we're all held prisoner by our beliefs. However, if these beliefs happen to be positive, we can count on them for support and encouragement when we need them. They can be our rock. One such belief might be that things will always turn out okay in the end. That belief gives you the confidence that no matter how difficult your current situation, there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. This allows you to plow through some terrible times with the optimism that there are better circumstances on the horizon.

The negative voices in your head have an opposite effect. I'm sure you hear the same voices many of us hear. *I'm not smart enough, not pretty enough. I'll never be successful. I'm afraid people won't like me if they really know me. I'm afraid my ideas aren't worth sharing. My colleagues will laugh at my ideas and ridicule me.* Any of this sound familiar? Negative voices keep you from fully showing up at work and owning your talent and authenticity. This chatter goes on for most of our lives. But that inner monologue morphs over time to include a lot of limiting beliefs and fears about aging, and that's where we are now.

I'm telling you straight out: the fears and assumptions you have about aging will dramatically affect your ability to stay marketable and employed. No BS. And so, in this part, I call your attention to some of the ageist beliefs you may have that perhaps you're unaware of, because these have tremendous potential to sabotage your ongoing success and well-being. Once you have a better understanding of what

they are and their influence, you can work to reframe the negative to support a more positive mindset. That positivity is essential in order for you to build your confidence to take on workplace challenges. You need an all-hands-on-deck approach to maintain your career as you age.

I don't promise that I've covered every fear and assumption about being a fifty-plus professional woman. But as you read this section and do the exercises, you will have the opportunity to investigate your own personal beliefs, the ones that don't serve you and that set you up for failure. If you have positive assumptions, by all means, amplify them! But let's work on pushing the BS out of our lives as much as possible. This you control. And controlling your mindset is one of the most powerful badass things you can do. So, let's do it.

I'm Too Old to Get Promoted

I WAS FORTY-NINE YEARS old when I lost out on a promotion despite the fact that I'd worked my butt off, given my life to that company for nearly a decade, and had a consistent record of great performance. The rejection sucked. I felt betrayed and I was pissed. Instead of the VP job I wanted, they offered me a lateral position of AVP that would require me to relocate, which I took as another slap in the face. So, I left the company. Sayonara. Did I mention they gave the VP job to a man?

I was almost fifty and looking for a job. That wasn't something I had planned for by any means. I had naively thought I had some kind of job security because I was a top performer. I also believed, perhaps also naively, that although it might take some time, it wouldn't be difficult to find another position in a new company. That actually worked out to be true for me. I reached out to my network of former colleagues and let them know I was on the lookout for another job, and my dear friend Cheryl told me about an opening for a CEO position in her organization. I interviewed and got the job. It was a big promotion.

I could have let the experience of being passed over teach me that I was too old to get promoted. Yet never once did I think that I wouldn't land a higher-level job just because I had reached the big

five-O. That belief would have sabotaged me. I wouldn't have been able to confidently position myself. Never once did I believe that I wasn't marketable. I believed the opposite was true. I was just coming off an incredible eight years at my last company. I grew my region from \$10 million to \$150 million. I opened new offices, expanded services, and won every award the company had to offer. So, yeah, I knew I was marketable despite losing out on the VP job I wanted. I was optimistic about my future.

Here's my point: at this age, you're at the peak of your career. This is when you have the most to offer. You know more today than you've ever known. So, if you're looking for a promotion, ask yourself this: Why should your age limit your value? You now have more experience and wisdom than ever before. Age enhances your value.

Experience = value

Wisdom = value

Therefore, age = value

See what I mean?

Listen, you didn't get to where you are today by slacking off. You didn't put in long hours and juggle work-life responsibilities or do the political dance at work for nothing. You've worked hard. You've accomplished a lot over the course of your career so far. And guess what? You're not done yet, so stop telling yourself you are!

Does your track record suddenly have no value? That's bullshit. You deserve to be promoted.

Look at the some of the world's most powerful women who were promoted after fifty. At the age of sixty, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Clinton, and she remained there until her death, at eighty-seven. Nancy Pelosi was sixty-seven when she first became Speaker of the House, and then

again at seventy-nine. And if you look at the top-ranked women CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, nine of the top ten are over fifty and the only woman who isn't fifty is forty-nine as of this writing.

Did any of these women think they were too old to get promoted? Can you imagine Nancy Pelosi saying, "I'm grateful to you for honoring me with this position of Speaker of the House, but I think I'm too old to accept it"? How would that go? All of these women put themselves out there to get promoted. They wanted it. They're ambitious and they don't believe that ambition has a timetable. They know their value. And by the way, consider the consequences for us if they weren't in these positions!

I often tell my clients that they're stingy if they hold themselves back and don't push themselves out of their comfort zone to do what it takes to get promoted. They're stingy because they have so much value to offer their team, their manager, their company. Sure, a promotion benefits you personally. You get more responsibility and power, more recognition, and probably more money. But your promotion also benefits others who will reap the rewards of your leadership and wisdom.

Don't let your chronological age be the barrier to your ongoing success.

But let's say you *do* believe you're too old to be promoted. Follow me on this. How does this belief hold you back?

Here's an example. If Barb believes she won't get promoted because of her age, it decreases her motivation and energy level at work. She feels like a victim and, consequently, powerless to control her future. She no longer volunteers for highly visible assignments, which takes her off the radar. She rarely offers her opinions, which decreases her credibility. She simply does the work required and nothing more. She most likely appears tired and disinterested in what's going on around her. She doesn't engage. She feels like an outsider at work, isolated and uncomfortable.

So, her belief becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. She will not get the promotion, but it may not be because of her age. It may be because she has unconsciously taken herself out of the competition.

Light bulb!

There is a direct link between your assumptions and your attitude and behavior at work, which can set you up to be marginalized without your being aware of it.

Let's reframe this and create a positive mantra to replace the negative belief that you are too old to be promoted:

I'm smart and ambitious, and I have a lot of value to offer my organization going forward.

Doesn't that feel better? Why tell yourself your days of career advancement are over? Don't let yourself get distracted by this bullshit.

Write out your own positive mantra, keep it visible, and say it out loud each day.

Instead of thinking about all the reasons you won't be promoted, start a list of all the reasons you deserve to be promoted.

It might look like this:

- I introduce innovative ideas that keep our customers engaged and loyal.
- My work has resulted in \$_____ of revenue in the past year.
- I have strong relationships with our clients, who trust me to handle their most challenging issues.
- I help our team see the customer's perspective, which builds strong relationships.
- Over the course of my career, I've learned how to wisely assess situations and find strategic solutions.

- My value only increases with age as I bring to my team the many lessons I've learned about business over the years.
- Individuals across the company respect me, trust me, and look to me for advice and leadership.
- I'm ready, willing, and able for this promotion.

Create your own list of at least three to five reasons you should get promoted, and focus on them going forward.

Here's my point: as soon as you believe you're too old, you'll be stuck where you are for the remainder of your career, and you'll sabotage your future success. Is that really what you want? Don't be afraid. Forget the self-doubt. This is your life and your career. Go for what you want and deserve.



About the Author

AWARD-WINNING ENTREPRENEUR, *Forbes* contributing writer, and executive coach Bonnie Marcus, MED, assists professional women in successfully navigating the workplace and positioning and promoting themselves to advance their careers.

With twenty-plus years of sales and management experience, Bonnie's extensive business background includes CEO of a ServiceMaster company and VP of sales at Medical Staffing Network and two other national companies in the health care and software industries. She has held executive positions in start-ups and Fortune 500 companies.

Bonnie started her corporate career at an entry-level position and worked her way up to the top of a national company. Her passion is now to help other women embrace their talent and ambition, to step into their full potential and workplace power.

Bonnie shares her message globally through speaking engagements, live and virtual workshops, blogging, and her popular podcast, *Badass Women at Any Age*.

In addition to *Forbes*, Bonnie has been published in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Fast Company*, *Entrepreneur*, *Business Insider*, *Daily Worth*, *Women of HR*, *Fairygodboss*, *Forge Medium*, and on *HR.com*. She has also been featured by the *Wall Street Journal*, *BBC Business Daily*,

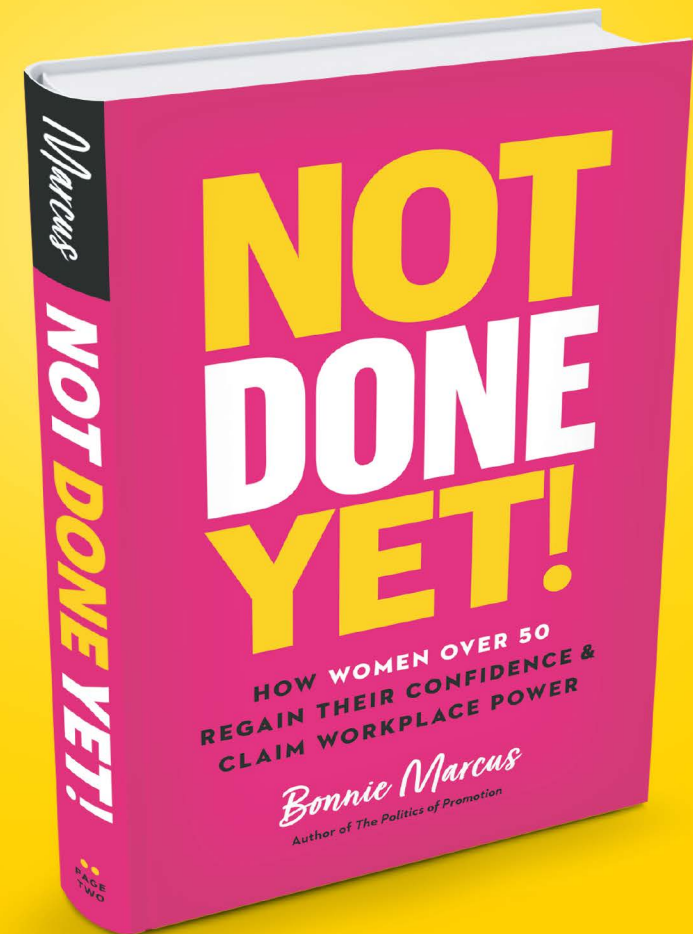
LA Times, Huffington Post, Fortune, Reader's Digest, Diversity MBA, Dow Jones Moneyish, Levo League, Upstart Business Journal, Psychology Today, Crains NY Business, Men's Health, and CIO Magazine, among others.

A certified coach, Bonnie has been honored by Global Gurus as one of the world's top thirty coaches from 2015 to 2020. She has been acknowledged as one of the top 100 keynote speakers in 2018 by Dat-
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Bonnie received a BA from Connecticut College and an MEd from New York University.

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